

The President. It's just a shirt my daughter gave me.

Q. And the numbers on the back?

The President. I'm not sure. I have no idea. I hope it's not something embarrassing; I don't have a clue. *[Laughter]*

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:55 a.m. in room 306 at the school. In his remarks, he referred to U.S. District Judge Susan Webber Wright; Robert S. Bennett, the President's attorney in the Paula Jones case; Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu of Israel; Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority; Gen. Julius Becton, USA (Ret.), superintendent, District of Columbia public schools; and Sam Donaldson, ABC News White House correspondent. A reporter referred to Raymond G.H. Seitz, former U.S. Ambassador to the United Kingdom. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks to Volunteers at Cardozo High School

January 19, 1998

The President. Thank you. Are you having a good day?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Me, too. I want to thank Mr. Ballard, the principal, and I want to say a special word of appreciation to the officials who are here with me today: first, the head of the Corporation for National Service, Harris Wofford; DC City Council Chairperson Charlene Drew Jarvis; General Becton; School Board President Harvey; Terri Green, the PTA president; the other school board members; and representatives of council members. And especially I want to thank all the volunteers in the AmeriCorps NCC program. And thanks for this; I like my little jacket here.

Thirty-one years ago Martin Luther King came to this very neighborhood and urged the people here to engage in citizen service to rebuild their lives and their community and their future. That's what you're doing here today. You are honoring the legacy of Martin Luther King and answering the highest calling of citizenship in this country.

My staff did a little research to illustrate what we could all do if we just gave back a little to our community. And they swear that if just everybody with the last name of

Clinton and Gore in America—just the people whose last name is Clinton and Gore in America—would put in two hours a week, they could paint every classroom and every public high school in America by Martin Luther King's next birthday.

Now, that gives you an idea of what we can do if we serve and work together. That's why I have invested so much in AmeriCorps, our national service program that I'm so proud of. And all of you who are involved in the program, let me thank you from the bottom of my heart. I hope that you're getting a lot out of it. I know the AmeriCorps volunteers I painted with today made me feel proud that we started this.

That's why I have strongly supported, along with all the former Presidents, General Colin Powell and the Presidents' Summit on Service and the work that he is doing and that tens of thousands of people across America are doing to give all of our children a good chance in life.

But finally let me say that this country will never be all that it can be and your future will never be all that it can be unless we decide we're going to build that future together. We will never be able to bridge the racial and other divides in this country unless we decide we're not only going to work together and learn together but we're going to serve together.

We actually have to believe that we're all better off when our neighbors are better off. We actually have to believe that we'll do better if we go forward together. We actually have to believe that this diversity we have is a blessing; and that the fact that some of us start out life poorer than others is a condition that can be overcome if we work hard to give people who deserve it a hand up; and that as we do that, we are all happier, more fulfilled, and living in a stronger America. That's what this is about.

This is not just about painting the walls of a school, although I passionately believe it's important. I, personally, as a student, preferred old buildings to new ones, but every student deserves to go into a clean building with bright walls and clear windows, sending a signal that the student and his or her future is important.

But you're not just painting a school today, you're painting a very different picture for America's future, and it's a beautiful one because of you.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:49 p.m. in the cafeteria. In his remarks, he referred to Reginald C. Ballard, principal, and Terri Green, Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) president, Cardozo High School; Wilma Harvey, president, District of Columbia school board; former Presidents Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, and George Bush; and Gen. Colin Powell, USA (Ret.), chairman, America's Promise—The Alliance For Youth. The President also referred to the AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) program of the Corporation for National and Community Service.

Message on the Observance of the Lunar New Year

January 14, 1998

Warm greetings to all those celebrating the Lunar New Year.

This joyous occasion celebrates the blessings of family, community, and a rich and ancient heritage. It is a special time to reflect on the events of the previous year and to embrace the challenges of the year ahead. Vibrant with color, lights, dancing, parades, folk music, and delicious food, the Lunar New Year reminds all of us of the beauty and variety of Asian culture and of the strength, character, and achievement that Asian Americans bring to our national life.

As we join you in welcoming the Year of the Tiger, Hillary and I extend best wishes to all for a new year full of health, happiness, prosperity, and peace.

Bill Clinton

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 20.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu of Israel

January 20, 1998

Cuba-U.S. Relations

Q. Good morning, Mr. President.

The President. Good morning.

Q. Mr. President, Cuba is about to be in the news. What does the United States gain from pressing the embargo?

The President. Well, let me say, our position on that is that we want Cuba to move toward freedom and openness, and if they do, we'll respond. That's always been our position, and I believe in the end it will prevail.

Middle East Peace Process

Q. Mr. President, on the Middle East, Mr. Arafat is talking with some threatening phrases, speaking of maybe the intifada will be resumed. And of course, the Prime Minister said last night that's no way to negotiate. How do you feel about—

The President. I agree with that. I think if he makes an observation that if this whole thing fails, that it won't be good, then that's understandable. But I don't think it should be encouraged. I've really looked forward to this week. I've worked hard to get ready for the meeting. I'm anxious to begin my sixth meeting with the Prime Minister and then to see Mr. Arafat in a couple of days. And I think we have to have a positive attitude. We need to be reassuring to people. We don't want to undermine any confidence. We need to keep working.

Q. Mr. President, you said yesterday that you had high hopes, and that seems out of step with some of the views of your top officials here. What makes you have high hopes for these talks?

The President. Well, I've often been out of step, in having high hopes, with a lot of people. It may be a defect in my nature, but I think—for one thing I think that Israel wants peace and a resolution of this. And I believe that it's very much in the interests of the Palestinians and Mr. Arafat to seek to resolve it, and we're working very hard. I've just found that, more often than not, you ultimately have success if you stay at something and keep working at it in good faith.

Q. Mr. President, could you just tell us what you believe a credible withdrawal would be? And does Chairman Arafat need to do anything before such a withdrawal should take place?

The President. I think that's a conversation I need to have with the Prime Minister first. I don't—and I will do that.